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Granholm keeps Tienken Road closed; veto legitimizes blockading roads

LANSING — The Friday veto of a bill that would open Tienken Road to through traffic between two Oakland County communities drew strong criticism from the measure's sponsor.

"What a shame," said Sen. Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, who sponsored Senate Bill 145. "The lack of leadership and the utter disrespect for the voices of literally thousands of people of this community is an abomination of representative government. This amounts to a roundhouse punch in the face to citizens and the emergency response community that worked so hard to design this very fair remedy to a long and bitter situation. We are embarrassed by this outcome and furious at the audacity of our governor."

Bishop was joined in his dismay by Sen. Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac, co-sponsor of the bill and chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee.

Senate Bill 145 would have set a process for boards of counties with more than 1 million people to gain jurisdiction over closed roads that serve two communities. The effort stems from the early 1990s when Auburn Hills closed Tienken Road at the city's border with Rochester Hills, causing motorists to drive miles out of their way to circumvent the earthen barrier. Under the proposed legislation, the community closing a road would have to demonstrate a compelling need to close a road that serves an adjacent community.

"With the single stroke of her pen Governor Granholm has created a dangerous and terrifying precedent in the state of Michigan," Bishop said. "Her lack of judgment is matched only by her failure to exercise the leadership required by this situation. By vetoing Senate Bill 145, the Governor has endorsed blockading a road as a legitimate and appropriate response to community disputes."

"Her action today has made a tragic and dangerous situation worse, and is just another in a series of questionable decisions undermining voters' faith in her ability to represent their interests," Bishop said. "Listening tours do not do justice to the reservoir of voter discontent stemming from a number of her decisions including increasing our taxes to turning a blind eye to our safety concerns."

Sen. Nancy Cassis, R-Novi, added: "The governor once again has demonstrated a lack of serious interest and sensitivity to our growing suburban areas and their unique traffic problems. Let us hope she will reconsider her pattern of vetoing important legislation affecting Southeast Michigan. First she vetoes legislation allowing suburban representation on the board of the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, now this."